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Chairman: Mr. Apenteng ..... (Ghana)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 123: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 (*continued*)

Safety and security of United Nations personnel (A/56/469 and Corr.1 and A/56/619)

1. **Mr. Sevan** (United Nations Security Coordinator), introducing the report of the Secretary-General (A/56/469 and Corr.1), said that the tragic events of 11 September had demonstrated that security could never be taken for granted. United Nations staff members expected the Organization to take steps to protect them. As the Secretary-General had said before the Fifth Committee in May 2001, security was a fundamental requirement for the effective functioning of all United Nations operations. Without it, many programmes, such as those with humanitarian objectives, would be impossible to implement. Many details concerning security improvements could be found in the report of the Secretary-General on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel (A/56/384). The attention and resources given to the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator by the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session were already paying dividends. The Office had been able to reinforce its coordinating role in the security management system, and in some instances to reverse the trend towards the establishment of independent security initiatives by other organizations in favour of closer cooperation and coordination. It continued to present its security and stress management training programme to United Nations system staff around the world. By 1 November 2001, mobile training teams had visited 29 countries and provided training for some 8,000 staff members. Training appeared to be making a difference, for the number of staff members who had lost their lives as a result of malicious acts had fallen dramatically.

2. Security could no longer be seen as expendable; it must be a fundamental component of all United Nations activities and it should be planned and implemented with the appropriate care. Especially in the light of the events of 11 September, security structures and operating procedures needed to be revised and updated. A critical part of that process was the appointment of a full-time security coordinator at the Assistant Secretary-General level to head a separate and clearly identifiable organizational structure as proposed by the Secretary-General. He urged the Committee to consider that proposal favourably.

3. In section II of resolution 55/238, the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to develop, in coordination with executive heads of the United Nations specialized agencies, programmes and funds, an effective mechanism for cost-sharing arrangements. Agreement had finally been reached and a proposal for cost-sharing was outlined in paragraphs 37 to 38 of the report. In broad terms, the agreement provided for field-related costs to be apportioned to participating organizations based on the number of staff they had in the field and for central management costs to be assumed by the United Nations.

4. Proposals to strengthen the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator consisted of three components, relating to operations in the field, operations at Headquarters to support the field, and overall management of security at Headquarters.

5. Accountability had been discussed at the most recent inter-agency meeting on security. While it had not yet been possible to develop a comprehensive plan in that regard, there was agreement on how to proceed. Over the coming months, his Office would be convening a working group to develop the accountability standards in greater detail.

6. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report of the Advisory Committee (A/56/619), said that the proposed total cost of strengthening the security of United Nations personnel amounted to $55.4 million. The costs would be shared between the United Nations, the specialized agencies, funds and programmes and other participants. The revised staffing table included a total of 338 posts, 38 of which would be at Headquarters, including those funded from extrabudgetary resources. The 63 additional posts referred to in paragraph 10 of the Advisory Committee's report would be recruited and managed by the respective specialized agencies, funds and programmes. Although the cost to the United Nations would amount to $10.4 million, the additional request was for $8 million, taking into account the resources already included in the initial estimates. The Advisory Committee supported the proposals of the Secretary-General and had made several recommendations regarding their implementation, which were contained in its report.

7. **Mr. Kennedy** (United States of America) said that his country, like all Member States, had suffered the loss of its citizens abroad. Since 1992, over 200 United Nations personnel had lost their lives in the field, and everyone had a shared responsibility to ensure that proper and effective measures were taken to limit further casualties. The report of the Secretary-General (A/56/469) was the result of a broad effort over the past year to create a more equitable cost-sharing arrangement for security management. The new arrangement allocated financial responsibility to all of the nearly 30 United Nations organizations that maintained a field presence. While it was a positive first step towards a stronger security system, many more steps would need to be taken, including the appointment of a full-time security coordinator, in order to guarantee the security of United Nations personnel effectively.

8. The current proposal provided coverage for only 64 of the 80 duty stations considered high-risk posts. Each of the proposed 100 field security officers would be supported by two locally hired staff members. His delegation questioned whether such an arrangement would be sufficient to provide field security officers with the necessary regional knowledge and expertise; it would like to see a more balanced staffing pattern throughout the 80 high-risk duty stations. In addition, it supported the establishment of a clear chain of command between the field and Headquarters. Many duty stations were staffed with security officers hired by United Nations agencies; in addition to the field security officers assigned by the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator; that created a huge potential for confusion during a crisis and a high likelihood that standard procedures would not be followed. The Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator must provide direction to all security personnel in the field by providing standard operating procedures; that would be more cost efficient and would also enable security resources to be deployed more widely. His delegation also supported the recommendation for a security training unit run by the Office.

9. In his view, the plans for security improvements were fundamentally flawed by the report's failure to address the issue of accountability. It was essential to ensure that a mechanism was in place for tracking and enforcing accountability, from the most junior to the most senior levels, and that such a mechanism was both vertical and horizontal in character. Recent circumstances had necessitated rapid responses to crisis situations in the international arena and, as a result, standard security procedures had been circumvented in some cases. That was both dangerous and unacceptable. Security rules and guidelines must be established with the necessary flexibility to apply in all circumstances, and accountability was the key to holding the whole system together.

Agenda item 134: Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping forces in the Middle East

(b) United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
(A/56/431 and Corr.1 and A/56/510 and Corr.1)

10. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report of the Advisory Committee (A/56/510 and Corr.1), said that it recommended approval of the proposal in the report of the Secretary-General (A/56/431 and Corr.1).

11. **Mr. Assaf** (Lebanon) expressed his country's gratitude for the efforts made by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to restore peace in the region, as well as its full support for UNIFIL at all political, administrative and financial levels. Despite difficult economic circumstances, Lebanon continued to pay its contribution to the Force in full and to provide duty-free access to imports for the exclusive use of UNIFIL.

12. He drew attention to paragraphs 25 and 26 of the report of the Secretary-General, in which it was stated that Israel had failed to pay the reparations required under a series of General Assembly resolutions to account for its premeditated attack on a United Nations centre in Qana in 1996. It was essential to hold Israel financially accountable to the United Nations for its actions; his country would hold consultations with the members of the Arab Group and the Group of 77 and China with a view to the adoption of the necessary resolution.

13. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said it was regrettable that a representative of the Secretary-General had not been able to introduce his report, since his delegation would have liked to ask for some clarifications. He expressed support for the comments made by the representative of Lebanon. Referring to paragraph 10 (c) of the report of the Secretary-General,

he expressed satisfaction with the balanced way in which the report dealt with the possible reduction of UNIFIL to a force of 2,000 troops. The original proposal of the Secretary-General, endorsed subsequently by the Security Council (S/2001/500), made that reduction conditional on prior consultations with Lebanon and the troop-contributing countries. The decision to reduce the Force to 2,000 would not be made with certainty until June 2002. The situation was, however, misrepresented in the report of the Advisory Committee, from which it appeared that the reduction had already been decided. He could not therefore support paragraph 11 of that report. His delegation would also have liked to see a clear reference to the Qana incident referred to by the representative of Lebanon.

14. Referring to paragraph 12 of the report of the Advisory Committee, he said that it was useful to bear in mind that, after the abolition of four Professional posts in the Mine Action Coordination Cell, the related de-mining functions would be outsourced to contractors. Since the de-mining programme was financed by voluntary contributions, it would be very vulnerable to a decline in such contributions.

15. **Mr. Adam** (Israel) said that he was disturbed by the politically motivated manipulation of the Committee. He hoped that no political elements would be introduced into the draft resolution on UNIFIL so that it could be adopted by consensus, in line with the Committee's usual practice. There was no precedent for a particular Member State's bearing sole financial responsibility for damage sustained by United Nations forces in the context of a peacekeeping operation. The cost of such damage should be absorbed by the general budget for peacekeeping operations, in accordance with the principle of collective responsibility. He recalled the comments made in that regard in a letter from the Permanent Representative of Israel addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2001/942) and in his delegation's statement at the General Assembly's plenary meeting on 14 June 2001 (A/55/PV.103).

16. **Mr. Assaf** (Lebanon) said that he regretted having to repeat the same arguments year after year. While other bodies were responsible for determining Israel's liability for compensating the victims of the incident at Qana, the Fifth Committee was entitled to call for the payment of the amount of $1,284,633, which had been recorded under accounts receivable for UNIFIL, to cover the cost of damage to United Nations property. That could not be termed a political issue. If the General Assembly set a precedent by requiring Israel to bear full responsibility for the damage, it was only responding to the precedent which Israel had set by deliberately bombing United Nations facilities.

17. **Mr. Alatrash** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that an attempt was being made to force the international community to support the continuation of aggression by forcing it to bear the cost of such aggression. He could not agree to take financial responsibility for what he viewed as deliberate terrorist acts against civilians and United Nations forces that had tried to preserve peace and security in the Middle East.

18. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said, in reply to the Syrian delegation, that paragraph 11 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/56/510) must be read in conjunction with paragraphs 8 and 9 of that report. Paragraph 8 mentioned the Secretary-General's proposed 31.3-per-cent reduction in total resources for UNIFIL. One component of that reduction, namely troop strength, was dealt with in paragraph 9, which noted the proposal that troop strength should be reduced from 4,543 to 3,613 by 31 May 2002 and then to the target level of 2,000 by the beginning of the next financial period. Paragraph 11 indicated that the proposed reduction of 17 international staff posts was not commensurate with those reductions in troop strength. The Advisory Committee had not made any adjustments to the Secretary-General's proposed total requirement of $136.6 million. However, it had indicated that it expected to receive proposals for further reductions in international staff for the period beginning 1 July 2002. Subject to that observation, it had recommended acceptance of the Secretary-General's proposals.

19. **Mr. Yeo** (Director of the Peacekeeping Financing Division) said that the Secretary-General had proposed the abolition of four Professional posts in the Mine Action Coordination Cell and their replacement with an equivalent dollar amount for contractual services. That did not represent a decrease in the level of assessed funding for operational demining activities; rather, it reflected the Mine Action Service's conclusion that demining expertise could be obtained more efficiently and expeditiously through the Office for Project Services. Operational demining of areas in which UNIFIL was active would continue to be funded from

assessed contributions, while other activities relating to demining, such as the creation of national databases, would be funded from voluntary contributions.

20. With respect to the treatment of the Qana incident in the Secretary-General's report (A/56/431), he felt that the issue had been appropriately highlighted in the English-language version; he could ask the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services to verify that it had been treated similarly in all the language versions.

21. In section III of the report and in the explanations contained in the annexes thereto, the Secretariat had made no presumptions as to what steps the Security Council might decide to take beyond the current downsizing measures.

22. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, while paragraph 10 (c) of the report specified that a decision on the reduction of troop strength would be based on developments on the ground, the assumptions contained in other paragraphs were not similarly qualified. He had raised the issue so that the text could be amended as appropriate.

23. He agreed with the substance of the section on the Qana incident. He would have preferred to see the issue addressed separately, as in the past, but noted that the practice of recent years had been to mention it among other issues in connection with UNIFIL. With respect to paragraph 11 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/56/510), he felt that, if the General Assembly shared the Advisory Committee's expectation that the troop strength of UNIFIL would be reduced, then the Department of Peacekeeping Operations must take that fact into account.

24. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) pointed out that paragraph 11 of the Advisory Committee's report concerned civilian personnel, not troops. The Fifth Committee could decide whether to approve immediately the expected staff reductions mentioned in that paragraph or whether to await future proposals made by the Secretary-General in the light of action taken by the Security Council. If the proposed phased reductions in troop strength did not take place, then the reductions mentioned in paragraph 11 would not take place either, contrary to the Advisory Committee's expectations. In other reports, the Advisory Committee had made similar observations on the need to take future developments into account. The Fifth Committee could either request the Secretary-General to propose further reductions in international staff or provide guidelines for the Secretary-General not to propose such reductions.

25. **Mr. Assaf** (Lebanon) said that the issue of personnel reductions would be determined not by the Fifth Committee, but by the Security Council. His Government's position was that United Nations operations in Lebanon should continue with all the current elements in place. The aim was not to increase the burden of funding United Nations troops in Lebanon, but only to ensure that every effort was made to support peace and stability in the Middle East, which was priceless.

Agenda item 141: Financing of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (A/56/487 and A/56/621)

26. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Secretary-General's proposed budget for the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) amounted to $722.1 million for the period from 1 July 2001 to 30 June 2002 (A/56/487). The Advisory Committee, in its report on the subject (A/56/621), recommended approval of an appropriation of $692 million and a total assessment of $651 million, supplemented with commitment authority of $41 million. Details on those recommendations were contained in paragraphs 55 and 56 of the report.

27. The Advisory Committee had made comments and recommendations on a number of issues, including the management of wet-lease arrangements. It had commended the Mission for the measures taken to deal with the problems that had arisen in connection with wet-lease contingent-owned equipment arrangements, and had recommended that benchmarks should be developed to determine the capacity to strengthen the contingent-owned equipment verification process. That recommendation applied equally to all other peacekeeping operations. In addition, the Advisory Committee had questioned the proposed post reclassifications and transfers, which appeared to propose the upward reclassification of posts followed by the transfer of the same posts to other organizational units at their original lower levels. Accordingly, it had not agreed to all the proposed reclassifications. In paragraphs 49 and 50 of its report, the Advisory Committee noted the serious problems encountered

with contractor management. The Advisory Committee intended to follow up on the issue and to consider similar situations in other peacekeeping missions.

28. **Mr. Iossifov** (Russian Federation) said that, on the whole, his delegation was satisfied with the work of UNAMSIL, which was currently the Organization's largest peacekeeping operation. His delegation approached the question of the Mission's financing from the standpoint of ensuring the effective functioning of its military and civilian components and the successful implementation of its important mandate.

29. The proposed funding level of $722.1 million for the period from 1 July 2001 to 30 June 2002 represented a 31-per-cent increase over the level for the preceding period. That large increase reflected the expansion of the Mission's military component, which accounted for nearly 70 per cent of its expenditure. The Secretary-General had also proposed the addition of 126 posts under the civilian component and the reclassification of a number of posts. He shared the Advisory Committee's view that not all of the proposed reclassifications should be accepted and that only 107 additional posts should be approved. He noted the Advisory Committee's recommendation that a thorough analysis should be undertaken of the losses caused by the logistical contractor's failure to meet its obligations, so that such situations could be avoided in the future.

30. He supported the Advisory Committee's comments and recommendations on the level of appropriations for the Mission. Nonetheless, he was willing to support possible further reductions in the proposed budget level, particularly with respect to the administrative component of UNAMSIL.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.